

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 263 770

FL 015 391

AUTHOR Johns, Ann M.  
TITLE The New Authenticity and the Preparation of Commercial Reading Texts for Lower-Level ESP Students.  
PUB DATE 85  
NOTE 6p.; In: CATESOL Occasional Papers, Number 11 p103-07 Fall 1985. (16th, San Diego, CA, April 1985). In: CATESOL (California Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) Occasional Papers, Number 11, Fall 1985. p103-07.  
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Viewpoints (120)  
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS \*English for Special Purposes; Introductory Courses; Literature Reviews; \*Material Development; Primary Sources; Reading Instruction; \*Reading Materials; Relevance (Education); Second Language Instruction; \*Teacher Developed Materials; \*Textbook Preparation

## ABSTRACT

Simplification of reading materials for lower-level English for special purposes (ESP) instruction may make texts comprehensible, but it may not make them much different from texts written 50 years ago. What will make them different is their authenticity, an approach characteristic of ESP, even at the lowest levels. However, authenticity is often confused with relevance. The "new authenticity" assumes that the authenticity of the situation in which a text is written is not as important for teaching as other text qualities, such as its ability to activate learning strategies during the course and to encourage learning beyond the course of instruction. Simplified texts can be written with the new authenticity if both rhetorical and linguistic features are considered, thereby maintaining the character of the unmodified text at several levels. Much of the learning strategy activation may be achieved by the teachers as they move through the text, demonstrating through mid-reading activities how readers interact with text and overcome the confusion that often results from overexposure to new material. Motivation, which is central to all learning, can be increased by the use of topics that activate students' prior content knowledge or that increase students' interest in a particular subject. The new authenticity will be important to the advancement of ESP. (MSE)

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THE NEW AUTHENTICITY AND THE PREPARATION OF COMMERCIAL READING  
TEXTS FOR  
LOWER-LEVEL ESP STUDENTS

Ann M. Johns  
San Diego State University

What types of texts are appropriate for lower-level ESP students? How can we prepare texts which will be appealing, challenging, and authentic--yet comprehensible--for the large number of audiences which must be reached in the commercial market? These are the questions that I have been grappling with this year while writing original beginning and low-intermediate level reading materials for business and economics (EBE) students. Neither I nor the publisher has a very specific target population in mind, for within the lower-level EBE audience, we must appeal to students in language institutes and universities in this country and abroad and to business people hoping to brush up on their English. We know that though preparing ESP materials for more specific audiences is the ideal, it is not practical for most overworked teachers and underfunded ESP programs. Nor is it practical for publishers, who must sell to a number of audiences to meet their costs and turn a profit from time to time.

What we do know about my audience is that it finds most unadapted EBE reading difficult, if not impossible. The EBE population we have targeted cannot cope with Business Week, The Wall Street Journal or Samuelson's Economics. So the traditional answers to my questions posed above begin with simplification, ordinarily involving limitation of vocabulary and use of "simple" grammatical forms. My publishers have taken this traditional route, asking me to write simplified material, using as guides a lexicon based on children's literature, and a structural guide which permits only the present simple and the present continuous for the beginning level and the past, present perfect and some future forms for the low intermediate level. Though these guides are rather constraining, I have been told that I can go beyond them--and I do, by necessity, when I need to introduce relevant vocabulary or to create a more coherent text.

This simplification may make the texts easier for EBE low-level readers, particularly if they are using traditional

Ann M. Johns is an Associate Professor of Academic Skills and Linguistics at San Diego State University. She is active in CATESOL and has published in the TESOL Quarterly, the ESP Journal and Language Learning and Communication.

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"common core" grammars or coursebooks which include some of the same vocabulary as our lexicon guide. And simplification (or at least selection) seems to be both necessary for the classroom and consistent with the popular Natural Approach. Like others who've read about the Natural Approach, I have tried to employ the Comprehensible Input  $i + 1$  principles advocated by Krashen and Terrell (1983:33), at least in terms of vocabulary introduction and expansion. The structural guide constrains me from using these principles on the grammatical level, since Krashen's Natural Order Hypothesis, which focuses upon the acquisition of grammatical morphemes, does not coincide with the traditional introduction of tenses in my structural guide.

Simplification may make the texts comprehensible, depending upon the prior knowledge of the reading population. But it may not make the readings much different from those published fifty years ago when Palmer discussed simplification (Palmer, 1932, quoted in Mountford, 1975). What will make them different is their authenticity, for one characteristic that has distinguished ESP from other approaches to language teaching is its effort to produce authentic materials, even at the lowest levels (Robinson, 1980:35-37). T. Johns and Davies (1983), who take an approach quite different from my publisher's, opt for authentic, unsimplified materials, a route common in ESP:

...we wish as early as possible to introduce authentic, unmodified texts. It is important to note, we believe, that with authentic texts the teacher's responsibility for grading does not disappear; it is, however, transferred from control of the detailed linguistic features of the text to control of the difficulty of the tasks a student is expected to carry out and the amount of assistance he is offered. (1983:8)

Tawfiq (1984), when preparing materials for Iraqi medical students who read with difficulty, also operates under the assumption that authentic readings, but fairly simple texts, must be chosen:

Given that the main aim of the course is to develop reading skills I decided that an assumed way of achieving that aim is to use authentic medical texts which would be suitable to the student's level of both general and medical English. (1984:91)

But as soon as we accept the premise that authenticity is an essential element to ESP pedagogy, we realize that there is confusion about what the term means. Robinson (1981) notes, for example, that many confuse authenticity with relevance:

Relevance is generally desired in a course, but it

is possible to have realia which is nonetheless not exploited interestingly or usefully or which is simply not relevant to a particular class of students. Conversely, much relevant and interesting material has been used in many courses without being authentic. (1981:36)

Morrow (1977) cautions that a text written in an authentic (i.e., not classroom) situation may not be appropriate to a teaching situation or target population. Therefore, he, too, distinguishes between authenticity and relevance. He tells teachers to avoid "blind use of authentic texts," stating that every text has a "topic, function, channel and audience" particular to it. The teacher must match these with the target population and situations to which they will be exposed.

Widdowson further muddies the authenticity waters--and perhaps comes closer to the real demands of ESP--when he juxtaposes goal-oriented and process-oriented approaches to teaching, claiming that the latter is more authentic to student needs:

...such an approach rejects the pedagogic equation and accepts from the outset that the language data given to the learner will not be preserved in store intact but will be used as grist to the mental mill. Hence the language content of the course is selected not because it is representative of what the learner will have to deal with after the course is over but because it is likely to activate strategies for learning while the course is in progress. (1981:5)

What the New Authenticity (my term) of Widdowson, Robinson and Morrow seems to be indicating, then, is that the authenticity of the situation in which a text is written is not as important for teaching as other text qualities such as its ability to activate learning strategies during the course and to encourage learning beyond the course of instruction. "Since the aim of such instruction precisely is to develop a capacity to learn, it does not itself realize any special purpose but provides the learner with the potential for its realization." (Widdowson, 1981:6)

Can my simplified texts be written in accordance with the new authenticity, then? Morrow (1975) indicates that they probably can be, if both linguistic and rhetorical features are considered, thereby maintaining the character of the unmodified text at a number of levels. But simplification is not as much at issue here as is the effect of the reading upon the learners--the activation of their learning strategies and, I might add, the activation of their motivation to learn.

Much of the learning strategy activation may be achieved by the teachers as they move through text, demonstrating through mid-reading activities how readers interact with text and overcome confusion which often results from exposure to new material (A. Johns, 1984 and Davey, 1983). Exercises in which students identify text type through underlying semantic slots can also be used by teacher and student to activate strategies. I find particularly useful those developed from schema-theory by T. Johns and Davies (1983) and Johnson (1984), and those published by the Center for the Study of Reading (Armbruster and Anderson, 1982). Once a student has developed strategies for identifying text type (e.g., structure text) through using these exercises, s/he can activate these strategies in other reading situations. But it takes a capable teacher to promote mid-reading activities and to use the exercises based on schema-theory.

Motivation, which is central to strategy activation and to all learning, can be increased by the use of topics which activate students' prior content knowledge or which increase students' interest in a particular subject. Therefore, there can be motivating features within the texts themselves as well as within the classroom. I hope that my reading texts will have this motivating effect, for the issues with which they deal are global, though the ways in which the issues are dealt with may be uniquely American. Titles for these texts include: "Women in the Workplace," "Changing Jobs," "Employee Theft," "Unions--Good or Bad?," "Foreign and Immigrant Labor," "Consumer Protection and Consumer Anger," and "Methods for Influencing Government Decisions."

The challenges of the New Authenticity are great--and important to the advancement of ESP. We need to consider them as we consider the other realities of commercial materials development: the need to simplify readings on the text and discourse levels, the need to appeal to and challenge a diverse population and the need to produce materials that many teachers can use. I have enjoyed grappling with these challenges as I produce my EBE readings and hope that others will find them authentic.

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